

THE NEXUS

AR's original copy of the play, written & performed by
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Transcribed by Leanne Albillar

ACT I

(GARAK enters, shocked to see an audience. He walks through them.)

GARAK

This is extraordinary. Truly extraordinary.

(calling off)

Dr. Parmak! Where is he? This isn't what we anticipated. Or is it? Oh dear, I knew this was dangerous. I'm not quite sure how to proceed...

(he approaches an audience member)

Excuse me, I wonder if you could tell me where...who...? Perhaps this isn't such a good idea. My imagination never fails to amaze me. Must be

my imagination...or a dream. Or this is indeed the “Nexus” Parmak spoke of. He does say that one arrives at the Nexus through the imagination. And this seems to be a gathering place of some kind...a central connecting reality where every dimension folds into a single point that focuses past, present, and...

(he looks out in bewilderment, trying to match the “string theory” of existence with the current reality)

...future. But is this the future? I can't say much for the decor. Or the sartorial styles. No offense, but really! I always imagined the Nexus to be... But why am I telling *you* all this? Who *are* you people? Oh! I see. You're Parmak's Witnesses, aren't you? You know...or maybe you don't. Supposedly you exist in our imaginations, our thoughts, our dreams. According to Parmak, you witness everything. Like this. And if this is true, that means we're never alone. The thought makes my skin crawl. But that would account for you all being here in the Nexus...if this is the Nexus. I detest being so disoriented! Serves me right for agreeing to this folly. But it's not a folly. Parmak is convinced of the homeopathic healing powers of the imagination, but I don't quite understand what kind of healing I'm going to find here...let alone the information we so desperately need.

(a long moment as he studies the audience)

Witnesses. Witnesses to what, I wonder.

(BASHIR enters, also through the audience)

BASHIR

Elim! What are you doing here?

GARAK

Ah, Doctor! What a pleasant surprise! Good of you to come.

BASHIR

What do you mean? This is my subconscious mind.

GARAK

Really?

BASHIR

Yes! ...I mean no...not “really”. It’s my subconsciousness, there’s nothing real about it! But nevertheless, “you” weren’t invited. Just my luck... I finally manage to escape into my dreams and the only person I find here is you...Garak.

GARAK

Doctor...I’m sorry.

BASHIR

Me, too.

GARAK

No, I’m sorry that you feel this way because I have to tell you, quite honestly, that I’m the one who evidently conjured you for whatever reason, and not vice versa. Therefore, welcome to *my* dream, Doctor. In spite of your somewhat puzzling hostility, I accept your presence here with open arms. Please, make yourself at home.

BASHIR

Oh. I see. Well, no offense intended, my honored guest, but I fear that it is you who’s mistaken. This is *my* head, not yours. So why don’t you make *yourself* at home.

GARAK

Is that so? Well, if this is indeed your head, then perhaps you could introduce me to *your* other guests.

(they have arrived onstage by this time and study the audience)

BASHIR

And what the hell are you all doing here?

GARAK

Just as I thought, Doctor. You’re as surprised to see them as I was. Yes... *was* ...for I was here *before* you, and if, indeed, this is *your* dream, my antecedence would be something of a psychological first, wouldn’t you agree?

(scrambling, desperate)

So, allow me to introduce you, Doctor. These...are...the people...who...inhabit my imagination, the people of my past, present, and future...here to adjudicate my actions?

(he stops)

At least...I think...so...

BASHIR

What?

GARAK

They're...here...

BASHIR

I can see they're here, Garak!

GARAK

(to audience)

Why are you here?

BASHIR

I give up!

GARAK

(figures it out)

They're supposed to be Witnesses, adjudicators. Ahah! Yes! The connectors to information that could save untold lives! Randomly chosen and assembled...but by whom, I wonder.

BASHIR

Have you been drinking, Garak?

GARAK

Don't be naive, Doctor. If Parmak is right, if we are never alone...if even our deepest dreams are monitored... This could be some kind of trap our enemies have lured us into.

BASHIR

All I wanted was to do a little daydreaming - drift off to somewhere quiet - to think things through and I end up walking into Obsidian Order paranoia.

GARAK

How do you support these strong judgments, Doctor?

BASHIR

I don't need any medical instruments to diagnose your problem, Garak - I can tell at a glance - you're out of your mind! In fact, at this moment, you're trespassing in *my* mind! How you got here I'll never know! And besides, why *I'm* here, in my own head, is none of your business.

GARAK

I'm afraid, Doctor, the fact that I'm here as well *makes* it my business. Because I am here. Go ahead, touch me.

(BASHIR carefully pokes GARAK - just to check...)

BASHIR

Well, this is really weird. If this isn't my head, then what am I doing here?

GARAK

Do you remember the time I told you about the dream I had on the station, just before I left for Cardassia? You refused to believe that you had willed yourself to play the role of my grave digger in that dream.

BASHIR

Ok, ok, ok...so...

(trying to wrap his head around this)

Assuming I'm as crazy as you are...what role am I playing now?

GARAK

(calmly)

Precisely my question. Maybe you could help me, Doctor, with a theory that I'm beginning to form... Try this on for size... *Both* of us are out of

our minds, quite literally, and *both* of us are completely sane. We've been placed in this [current venue] with these people. *One* of us has only a *vague understanding* of what he's doing here, and *one* of us knows *exactly* why he's here. Tell me, Doctor, why are you here?

BASHIR

(nonchalantly)

Oh, Garak, you know how it all works, if I told you, I'd have to kill you.

(they look at each other. Is he serious? BASHIR breaks the moment with a laugh)

GARAK

Curiouser and curiouser. How you've changed. However, I have to say I do feel a tinge of pride at how well you've turned out, Doctor. You *were* listening during our frequent luncheons... Full marks.

(pause)

We have a name for this place. We call it the Nexus.

BASHIR

The what?

GARAK

Nexus. Where past, present, and future fold in and move through each other. The home of all knowledge, information, resources...

BASHIR

Ah! What we call the Aleph. The great point of connection. How did you access the Aleph? Find yourself here?

GARAK

I think you know, Doctor.

(pause)

Are we going to waste precious time with coyness?

BASHIR

(finally)

The wire.

GARAK

Yes, the wire. I should have known that the Federation would have assimilated the technology. To this day I'm amazed Tain gave you the information; he knew what you'd do. Maybe even *he* became a little sentimental in his old age - strictly, he should've let me die rather than divulge the specifications to you. I certainly hope that you'll acknowledge poor Mindur Timor as the inventor. When I told Parmark - who's trying to stem massive outbreaks of stubborn disease on Cardassia - when I told him about the *wire* and how the Order had inserted it into my brain to convert pain into pleasure, he struck upon the idea - experiment really - of a modification that would allow me access to this Nexus - or Aleph - in the hope that I might find here some of the answers he desperately needs. But even he could never have prophesied that I would stumble into you here...an *award-winning doctor* whose very specialty is inter-species medicine - rather poetic, don't you think?

BASHIR

Naturally, I will do what I can to help battle these plagues.

GARAK

So now you know why *I'm* here - why you're here, however is a juicy puzzle I've set to figure out, and your evasiveness makes it all the more challenging.

(a long look between them)

Are you here to judge me, Doctor?

BASHIR

I beg your pardon?

GARAK

I can't help feeling that this is some kind of trial and I'm the one being judged.

BASHIR

Why would that be?

GARAK

I haven't the slightest idea.

BASHIR

And why would I be your judge?

GARAK

Perhaps you're right. Perhaps it *is* just my paranoia, being in such a different place.

BASHIR

"O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space were it not that I have bad dreams."

GARAK

Don't tell me - your friend Shakespeare.

BASHIR

Bad dreams are real enough, I've learned that much. A good case for justifiable paranoia, wouldn't you say?

(pause)

Are you all right, Garak?

GARAK

Considering the circumstances, Doctor, isn't that a silly question?

BASHIR

I'm not just talking about here. You also seem a much different person since I saw you last.

GARAK

Do I?

BASHIR

Has your repatriation been anything what you'd expected?

GARAK

Did you ever read the material I sent you?

BASHIR

Your "chronicle". Indeed, yes.

GARAK

Then you should realize that my "repatriation" was indeed *not* what I had expected. We're still sifting through the debris, salvaging what we can.

BASHIR

Garak, may I speak frankly?

GARAK

I would expect nothing less.

BASHIR

I was moved by what you'd written to me. And honored that you'd revealed so much of yourself - the pain of returning to a destroyed home and what that brought up from your past. I'm sure it wasn't an easy thing to do.

GARAK

It was necessary.

BASHIR

Of course. But I have to ask, did it help?

GARAK

Help what?

BASHIR

Did you salvage anything? Move beyond your history, the old stories we tell ourselves over and over again. Beyond the tyranny of past choices.

GARAK

What do you think this whole rebuilding process, the Reunion Project, has been all about if *not* moving beyond?

BASHIR

But you're embroiled in another war, Garak!

GARAK

I know that, Doctor. Do you think I'm a complete fool? Evidently, from the majestic vantage point of your station, you have little understanding of what we've been going through, and even less of what's at stake.

BASHIR

Please, I know what's going on, my friend. Perhaps more than you think. The civil war that's been consuming Cardassia is of great concern to us all.

GARAK

If it's been of such great concern, then why haven't you responded to our appeals? Considering the ideals we're espousing, your lack of response has been nothing short of baffling. You know, on Cardassia we're convinced that, for you, democracy is just another computer game, that the civil war is just what the Federation wanted. You can just sit there, like at one of your football matches - and watch the soulless Cardassians destroy themselves to provide the entertainment.

BASHIR

I assure you, Garak, Federation policy has never espoused genocide.

GARAK

Then what does it espouse besides indifference and silence?

BASHIR

It's a complicated situation.

GARAK

What about your own silence, Julian? Is that complicated as well? Perhaps my chronicle was a bit *too* moving. A bit *too* messy for the genetically enhanced.

(a silence)

BASHIR

Why do you do this to yourself?

GARAK

Do what?

BASHIR

At first I thought, when I'd read your story...

GARAK

Story!

BASHIR

Yes, Garak, your story - which is just another story that we tell about ourselves. I thought, well, he's had to deal with this and that, and wasn't it terrible and of course he feels the way he does...

GARAK

But?

BASHIR

...but when I became aware of the choices you were making, and are making now...I didn't know how to respond.

GARAK

And why was that, Doctor?

BASHIR

Because I don't know why anyone with an experienced, fine sensibility, and a first rate mind insists on always taking second place.

(another silence)

GARAK

You *have* changed.

BASHIR

Well, we've all had time to think about the things that have happened in our lives. You're not the only one who's been making an inventory.

GARAK

Apparently.

BASHIR

But do they always have to be the dreary things that have happened to us? What about you, my friend and erstwhile lunch mate...which memory of all the lives you've led brings you the most pleasure?

GARAK

(wary of his sudden shift)

What do you mean?

BASHIR

When you were truly free. We so often only ruminate on the sad memories. When, if ever, have you felt like Elim Garak?

GARAK

(warms as he remembers)

I used to perch on the edge of a dirt cart, drinking cool Ribexa, watching my "father" - Tolan - gently knead the soil around newly transplanted orchid bulbs. He used to talk to his patients, softly reassuring them that they weren't lost or in danger. He was completely oblivious of me - but it didn't matter. I lived through him, Doctor, and I lived through those orchids, imagining that I myself was being carefully tucked into my own bed. When all the talk was of war and mayhem, I would wait till all was quiet in the house and go sit beside the planted bulbs, digging my toes into the moist earth, looking up at the stars...

BASHIR

Like your regnar.

GARAK

Mmm?

BASHIR

Transforming yourself, becoming at one with your environment. Isn't that what happened to you in your early training at Bamarren? When you leaned to *be* somewhere without being noticed.

GARAK

I was sent to Bamarren to learn how to kill...cleanly, dispassionately. To be part of a team that kills without question. But that tiny creature was my lifeline. Literally, my line to life. Through Mila, this regnar, I could still remember what it was like to be alive for life's sake.

BASHIR

L'chaim! To life! An old earthen sect called Jews used to say l'chaim to salute each other in celebration. No one says it anymore.

GARAK

No, I'm sure they don't. The Federation don't approve, do they, Doctor? Sectarianism is divisive, is it not? How ironic. How Cardassian! Everyone surrenders their individual culture for the greater good of the whole.

BASHIR

It evolved out of our choice, Garak. We have freedom of choice, and choice has kept us free.

GARAK

Of course you call it choice. Coercion would have been too Borgian, certainly not the Federation style. Assimilation by consent is much better. Keep the grass green on my side of the fence and simply wait for everyone to come on over. Sometimes, Doctor, choice is the last thing we need. Ask any child to make a choice, and he or she will invariably make a regrettable one. We're all such children.

BASHIR

Considering your support for democratic principles on Cardassia, I'm rather surprised to hear you say this.

GARAK

You wouldn't be, my friend, if you saw how some people are using these democratic principles. But perhaps they're simply following the Federation example. Perhaps Federation democracy is the most subtle, the most devious tyranny yet conceived.

BASHIR

The Federation is so much more than the huge bully you make it out to be, Garak. We are a peaceful organization - using our formidable military might to police our alliance and give our many citizens a secure home...a home where they can make "childlike" choices in safety. It may well scour the galaxy looking for converts...which nation does not? And when diplomacy fails, we must be prepared to match force with force. Prepared to do whatever is necessary to win. Anything less is unacceptable. Are you listening to me?

(during this speech BASHIR has been changing into a different persona)

BASHIR/CALYX

Ten Lubak! Drifting off again, are we? You really must do something about all this daydreaming, boy!

(GARAK has become the young ELIM and turns to face his “docent”)

BASHIR/CALYX

Stand over here.

(He points to a spot between them)

And make ready.

(GARAK does as instructed. He walks to a spot and assumes an alert defensiveness)

BASHIR/CALYX

Ten Lubak! Everything that takes you out of the moment is a dream, and every dream is a lie. And in combat, that means defeat and death! In today’s exercise you will *not* be told who your attacker is, *where* he is coming from, or *when* he will attack. Do you understand?

GARAK

Yes, Docent Calyx.

BASHIR/CALYX

No, you don’t! But you must be prepared anyway...prepared to fight in the manner most appropriate to the method of attack. Are you prepared to kill?

GARAK

Yes, Docent.

(BASHIR studies GARAK for a beat, assessing his overall alertness and readiness. During this time, BASHIR walks across the stage to GARAK’S station. He changes persona again when he gets there)

BASHIR/PALANDINE

(as Palandine)

What are you standing there looking so silly for?

(GARAK doesn't answer. He just focuses on the task at hand, aware the instructor may mount an attack at any moment)

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Elim...? Elim Garak! Hello...? It's me, Palandine. Have I changed so much?

GARAK

Go away!

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Well, that's not very nice. You're so mercurial, Elim...one minute you're my friend, the next you shun me.

GARAK

Go away! I'm in the middle of an exercise. The docent is watching, waiting to attack. It could come any minute...from anywhere.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Out here? With all these people around? Elim, we're not at Bamarren anymore. Look!

(GARAK slowly swings around to face BASHIR, his guard still up)

BASHIR/PALANDINE

We're in the Tarlak Grounds in Cardassia City, Elim. I must say you're making a spectacle of yourself. People have been watching you. Not very discreet of you, my little regnar.

(GARAK comes out of his stance and looks around at his surroundings - the audience. He's terribly confused)

GARAK

Wh...? How did I get here? A moment ago I was with Calyx being chastised for daydreaming and readying myself for a fight with an unknown enemy. But it's just you...

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Yes, Elim, *just me*. What are we waiting for? Can you tell me that? Why have we denied ourselves the pleasure of each other's company? Are we so timid? We work so hard on our defensive stances to make us effective warriors, to kill, to kill our dreams, but when it comes to taking the action that would make our dreams come true... make us happy... So I threw caution to the wind and...here I am. *Just me*. When you struck that odd pose...honestly...I thought you'd had second thoughts about seeing me again after all this time and were pretending you were a tree or something, hoping I'd walk right by.

(GARAK walks over to what was BASHIR'S station. They have now swapped places)

GARAK

Isn't this dangerous for you? To be seen in public with me? Barkan must have people watching your every movement.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Of course it's dangerous. You knew the danger involved when you agreed to this rendezvous.

GARAK

(trying to orient himself)

Yes...of course...I...

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Ah, you *are* having second thoughts.

GARAK

No, Palandine, it's just that...your mate...

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Barkan will indeed be angry at me, yes, and no doubt he will devise some imaginative and unnecessarily cruel punishment. He's very talented in that area.

GARAK

Then you must leave - quickly. I couldn't forgive myself if I were to be the cause of...

BASHIR/PALANDINE

You needn't worry, Elim. I welcome his torture. Yes, I do. I *often* do things to provoke his anger. At least the *pain* of our relationship is real. It actually comforts me. You're shocked to hear me say that.

GARAK

I'm...saddened.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

As am I. My life is such a mess, Elim. Oh, how I miss the days when we were at Bamarren and I actually believed that I had a contribution to make.

(GARAK slowly moves back to BASHIR)

And now... the mate of one of Cardassia's most respected leaders... What a *pickle* ! I've made some terrible choices, haven't I, Elim?

GARAK

We make the choices we have to.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Ah yes, the choiceless choices. Well, I want to reclaim my life, Elim. From now on, I will talk to whomever I please, be with whomever I want. Just for the “moment” of it. The pleasure. Are you with me, Elim? Elim?

BASHIR

(behind GARAK’S shoulder)

Elim?

GARAK

(stares into the middle distance)

We killed our dreams.

BASHIR

Elim? Are you here?

GARAK

(coming back to this place and regarding BASHIR with suspicion)

Yes. I am. The question is, *why* am I here, Doctor?

BASHIR

The wire. You wanted relief from the strain of Cardassia and you came to the Nexus.

GARAK

I came to the Nexus to get...

BASHIR

...To get information for Dr. Parmak that would alleviate the plagues ravaging Cardassia. At least that’s what you tell me... I know that’s what you’ve told yourself, and your friend Parmak has even provided you with a scientific rationale.

GARAK

I must say, your attitude is very puzzling, Doctor. It’s more than a “rationale,” I assure you.

BASHIR

I believe it! Using the wire nearly killed you once - you're risking a great deal by using it again.

GARAK

Perhaps my mind isn't as "first rate" as you claim.

BASHIR

Plain, simple Garak. Nothing exceptional, nothing sharp or angular. "Oh hello. I just happened to be in the neighborhood...Garak." Except this isn't exactly an ordinary neighborhood. I have to say that I don't find it to be as relaxing as I had hoped. A little chilling. Is it what you expected?

GARAK

You are not what I expected.

(GARAK pulls out a device and points it towards BASHIR)

BASHIR

That device will merely give you my species and genome classification. It will only tell you what you already know.

GARAK

I realize that. I just want to make sure that it's you. I don't know what you're doing or what you're up to. Only you can tell me that.

(GARAK begins to circle BASHIR, as he does so...)

BASHIR/FATHER

Elim, you're over sentimental. You're behaving like an infatuated fool. You're throwing away everything that you've worked for. And put that thing away, I'm as healthy as I was the day I was born.

(GARAK puts away the device and stands before his father, now a little boy)

GARAK/ELIM

But what can I do, Father? I had no choice.

BASHIR/FATHER

There is always choice. That's what your training was all about. To be aware of the circumstances and then choose how to react in order to control the situation.

GARAK/ELIM

Then I choose to follow her.

BASHIR/FATHER

And lose control of your life.

GARAK/ELIM

I'm exhausted by your *control*. The little boxes you put me in to teach me a lesson.

BASHIR/FATHER

They were for your own good. They taught you discipline.

GARAK/ELIM

All they did was choke my breath and leave me without hope.

BASHIR/FATHER

Elim, hope is for the lame and the blind. Go back to your training and overcome this weakness. Return to what you know best. Otherwise you're going to end up just like everybody else. Sitting there, feeling sorry for yourself while you witness your own demise.

GARAK/ELIM

It's too late, Father. I've stepped *out* of your box.

BASHIR/FATHER

No, you've just stepped into another one, that's all. A dream box.

(BASHIR turns around and leaves as GARAK continues)

GARAK/ELIM

Yes, a dream box. But why I do I feel quickened? Alive? Can you tell me that? You know everything. You've made it your life's work to know everything, but can you tell me why one dream feels more real than another? Why one box is suffocating, and another feels like hope? You

can't, can you? *Because they're all the same to you.* Spaces to be manipulated and controlled. And they were to me as well...

...Whenever I was in a room or a vehicle with several people crowded together, perhaps traveling through space, I'd feel nothing but irritation, anxiety, even panic at being in such close proximity to them. Their smells, their grating sounds, the way they needed to greedily hoard what little space was allotted to them. To control and defend against the other. Thanks to you, yes, I learned to control my space, to expand it - I felt such pride when no one even remembered I had been there. So what's the difference between that and that night I found myself standing in a small pool of moonlight with her at the Bamarren Grounds? Instead of choking with fear and repulsion, I felt alive, breathing the same scented air - truly expanded into a space where I couldn't tell where I ended and she began.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

Not one of these impression are anything to be ashamed of, Elim Garak. They are the simple feelings that we all experience.

GARAK/ELIM

(he looks around, disoriented - finally sees BASHIR a distance away)

Where's my father?

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

Was he here?

GARAK/ELIM

I think so.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

Then he was. I didn't realize he came to our meetings. But now that we're no longer outlawed we've had many unexpected visitors. I'm glad you've returned, Elim. We've missed you.

GARAK/ELIM

We're killing each other. The plague, the civil war - the way we killed the Hebetians. Except this time there won't be anyone left.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

We've always been killing each other. Have you only just noticed?

GARAK/ELIM

You're an Oralian Guide. What kind of answer is that?

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

As long as there are seekers, there's hope.

GARAK/ELIM

That's a childish response. That tells me nothing.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

What would you like me to tell you?

(pause)

That she's here?

GARAK/ELIM

Is she?

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

The important thing about seeking, Elim Garak, is to keep a certain distance, so that when we encounter what we're looking for, we can see it.

GARAK/ELIM

It's not that easy to maintain a distance when they're killing each other. I thought we had the answers to stop it.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

Yes, but we stopped at the answers. We didn't put them to the test every day and move beyond them.

GARAK/ELIM

But we did! We resisted the guls and legates who wanted to go back to the old answers and reinstate the oligarchy. We voted. We created a democracy.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

But did we renew it every day? We tolerated little corruptions, little omissions, little lies. We pretended not to notice because it was easier to do business the old way, wasn't it?

GARAK/ELIM

To cut the old deals... Pretending to serve the people.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

And the more we pretended...

GARAK/ELIM

...the more we lost sight of our renewed purpose.

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

We concentrated power - excluded those who weren't like us.

GARAK/ELIM

Small betrayals led to larger ones until all we cared about...

BASHIR/HEBETIAN

...once again!

GARAK/ELIM

...was increasing our own wealth and comfort and power.

(BASHIR walks back to his station - business-like)

GARAK/ELIM

Perhaps Enabran's right, hope is for fools. Yes, I've reactivated the wire. I've come to this place. But I can't see her. I can't see her!

BASHIR

Er... Excuse me, I don't want to interrupt your little...erm...mental vacation, Mr. G. - but you stopped scanning me with that device ages ago and I just can't wait to hear the news...

GARAK

(coming out of it)

What?

BASHIR

The scanner...you weren't sure...remember? Am I really me?!

GARAK

That's a very good question. I don't know. I'm totally confused.

BASHIR

(a little patronising)

Of course you are. But, seriously, I am a little worried about you, my friend. Could someone bring us some water or tea?

GARAK

Not that Earl Grey of yours!

(this triggers a reminiscence of BASHIR'S)

BASHIR

Don't start Earl Grey bashing again.

GARAK

I've never understood how any of you could tolerate that drink.

BASHIR

It helps us remember.

GARAK

Remember?

BASHIR

Ahhh, Earth...

GARAK

What?

BASHIR

Ah, sorry - we just miss Earth, that's all. Funny that, isn't it? ...It's not all "Federationised" you know, some of it is run down and struggling to keep up with the pristine Federation look. In some ways those are the areas I like best. There are whole land masses where the environment is so harsh that the people who live there have to forage for their food. Those people have no time to think about the Federation. Many of them hang on

to ancient customs and dialects - stubbornly refusing to “walk in step.”
Have you been to Earth, Garak?

GARAK

No, Doctor, I haven't, and quite frankly I don't understand the allure. A tiny ferrous carbon sphere orbiting around a singularly weak and, dare I say, almost extinct sun...

(BASHIR laughs)

BASHIR

Yes, my friend, that's what it is. A planet on life support. An elderly lady with respiratory problems...but a lady of such dignity and charm... You know, when I signed up...

(GARAK begins to pace the stage watching BASHIR)

...when I decided to join Starfleet - sure I thought I was going to fight for the “freedom of the Universe and all that - I realize now that the real reason was to fight for fragile, old Earth.

(suddenly GARAK leans right into BASHIR'S ear and shouts)

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

That's enough of that sentimental crap, little boy, save it for your mother. Christ! You prima donnas make me sick!

(BASHIR is confused)

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

Stand straight when I'm talking to you, boy! Sure, you have a fine brain in your *head* - one that'll help you pick your way through fancy algorithms and all that garbage. But your brain isn't going to be much use to you smeared all over the floor three yards behind a pair of lifeless shoulders, is it?

(BASHIR doesn't answer)

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

Is it!?

BASHIR

No, sir.

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

(mocking)

No, sir! You're not a "doctor" here, fancy boy! You're a god damned soldier - act like one! Got it?

BASHIR

Yes, sir.

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

What?

BASHIR

Yes, sir!

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

Excuse me?

BASHIR

Yes, sir!

GARAK/DRILL SERGEANT

On your face, boy - give me 50!

(BASHIR reluctantly drops to his hands and starts to do push ups. He counts them out - slowly)

BASHIR

One...two...three...four...

(BASHIR stops counting but keeps going. GARAK begins to walk around him, slowly making his way behind his body till he gets to his head where he stops. Inches away from his face)

BASHIR

...nine...ten...

GARAK/SLOAN

(almost whispering)

Ten! My, my! You are strong...

BASHIR

Eleven...twelve...

GARAK/SLOAN

Cadet Julian Subatoi Bashir... 17 last week! Congratulations! A medical genius by all accounts...the ladies must be very impressed. I know I am.

(BASHIR stops the push ups. Looks up - bewildered)

BASHIR

Sir?

GARAK/SLOAN

Sir? Thank you. I haven't been called that in a long time.

(BASHIR gets up, unable to make head or tail of the situation)

BASHIR

Excuse me, sir. But do I know you?

GARAK/SLOAN

Me? Oh no, I shouldn't think you do...

BASHIR

Then...?

(GARAK stares at BASHIR)

BASHIR

Do we have any business?

GARAK/SLOAN

Nope.

BASHIR

Then what do you want?

GARAK/SLOAN

I'm waiting for you to tell me.

BASHIR

What?

GARAK/SLOAN

Your secret...

BASHIR

I have no idea what you mean.

GARAK/SLOAN

I have been reading your history... Very impressive. But then again it should be, shouldn't it?

BASHIR

Who the hell are you? And what do you want??

GARAK/SLOAN

Go on...tell me what it is you're hiding...no one will ever know, I promise. Cross my heart and hope to die.

BASHIR

You're out of your mind.

GARAK/SLOAN

Pretty please.

BASHIR

I have to go.

GARAK/SLOAN

Goodbye.

(BASHIR just stands there, too intrigued to make his move)

GARAK/SLOAN

All my people have secrets. Secrets are good, Julian - nurture all your secrets, and they will grow more powerful. But also know that others have secret views as revealed, and the one who surrenders his secrets is the one who loses his power.

(GARAK walks away - he turns back)

I will be watching you, Julian Subatoi Bashir.

(GARAK turns his back and walks back to his podium. BASHIR looks off in the direction GARAK initially went)

GARAK

(as himself, back at his station)

Where are you going, Doctor?

BASHIR

(startled, spins to face Garak)

What?

GARAK

You said you have to go... *where* are you going?

BASHIR

I don't remember saying anything, Garak. What were we talking about? Earth, wasn't it?

GARAK

Yes, you were fascinating us all about little old Earth.

BASHIR

Yeah - what a place. Heh... I had some good times there.

GARAK

You didn't get off to a very good start though, did you?

BASHIR

On Earth?

GARAK

At the military training camp.

BASHIR

?

GARAK

I saw them. *Both* of them. Yes, there were two of them. The first one was a little crude, wasn't he? Perhaps he was speaking one of those dialects

you are so fond of. The second...well...he was intriguing. I almost feel as though I recognize him.

BASHIR

(gobsmacked)

You could see them?

GARAK

Oh yes! Not perfectly - like looking into the water and seeing a reflection of someone - not a distinct image, but an image nevertheless. The interesting chap was wearing black, I believe, and he appeared to have yellow hair.

BASHIR

I don't understand how you could have been able to see them.

GARAK

It does seem strange... / could see the people in your...mind. Yet you could not see the people in mine...hmm. *Advantage Garak*, I believe. You had better try not to drift off, in case you expose more than you intend. The Nexus - what a wonderful place. Full of surprises.

(BASHIR says nothing. They both ponder the ramifications of this development)

GARAK

Why are you here, Doctor? What do you want from me? You may as well say...who knows when you'll "drift off" again? I'll figure it out before long. It seems *no* secrets can be kept in this place. And it becomes clear to me why I see the people of your imagination, and why you do not see the people of mine.

BASHIR

You have nothing to hide.

GARAK

Precisely. I have no more secrets. There is nothing left for the Nexus to expose. Everything that I am has been chronicled in my "story". You know me. I must say, it's a liberating feeling. So, *why are you here*, Doctor? It's clear that you *do* have secrets, and it's clear that each and

every one of them will be revealed to us in due course. The longer we remain here, the longer you hide from me - the more will be revealed.

(GARAK takes a seat in the audience)

So, I think I'll just go ahead and make myself comfortable...

ACT II

(A lonely BASHIR stands on stage. GARAK is in the audience. He claps a little too long as the act starts. BASHIR is only 6 years old)

BASHIR

A, B, C, D, E, F...G...

(GARAK has become BASHIR's father)

GARAK/DAD

Go on, Julian. G?

BASHIR

G...

(he sweats this)

H, I, J, K, L, M, n, n, O, P...

(getting confident)

R, S, T -

(GARAK leaps to his feet in a rage and rushes onto the stage, physically grabbing the young BASHIR and shaking him violently)

GARAK/DAD

Q! Q! God damn you! Q! You're six years old, Julian! There is absolutely no excuse...

(GARAK leaves to go to his podium. BASHIR is stunned, motionless. He stands there for a long time while simply looking into the auditorium)

BASHIR

(a shift)

Dad? You here?

GARAK/DAD

Yeah, son. How do you feel?

BASHIR

Kinda weird...what happened?

GARAK/DAD

Oh, they just did some...stuff...you know, to make you feel better.
Bit like updating your operating system - same hard drive - just a new
OS. A shiny one...how do you feel, I mean, you know...feel.

(BASHIR doesn't know how to respond)

GARAK/DAD

(continuing)

Feel like? Do you feel different? How does everything look?

(BASHIR struggles to come to grips with his father's line of questioning)

BASHIR

I...I don't know...everything looks...good. You look good, Dad.

GARAK/DAD

(starts to sing)

A, B, C, D...

(BASHIR watches him)

GARAK/DAD

(continuing)

Go on. You do it. A, B, C, D...

(BASHIR isn't sure what to do)

GARAK/DAD

(continuing; rising panic)

A, B, C, D - sing the alphabet song for me, son - sing the song! Go on! A,
B, C...

(BASHIR takes over and with remarkable speed)

BASHIR

C, D, E, F, G

BASHIR

(continuing)

H, I, J, K, L, M, n, N, O, P

BASHIR

(continuing)

Q, R, S

BASHIR

(continuing)

T, U, V

BASHIR

(continuing)

W, X

BASHIR

(continuing)

Y, Z

(slowing down)

BASHIR

Now I know my A, B, C, next time won't you sing with me...

(GARAK can hardly contain his excitement)

GARAK/DAD

That's my boy! Look, everyone! This is my boy, Julian Subatoi Bashir!
He's exceptionally bright. Julian, recite the first...er...let's see...how about
Pi - not all of it - let's just say...to the tenth decimal place...

BASHIR

3.1415926535. Only forty-seven decimal places of Pi would be sufficiently precise to inscribe a circle around the visible universe that doesn't deviate from perfect circularity by more than the distance across a single photon.

GARAK/DAD

He's just six, you know! Yessir, that's my boy! He's going to be a doctor.

(BASHIR performs before a succession of imaginary audiences)

BASHIR

3.1415926535. Thank you. 3.1415926535. Thank you. 3.1415926535. Thank you.

(GARAK is himself again. He walks up to Bashir and simply hugs him. Bashir keeps babbling on for a minute before...)

GARAK

There, there, Doctor. There's no performance tonight.

BASHIR

(almost weeping)

Did I tell you, Garak, my father was a prophet? Even at the tender age of six he knew exactly what I was going to become - uncanny, don't you think.

GARAK

I couldn't leave you reciting that nonsense in front of everyone any longer. My old Cardassian heart couldn't take it. Even the compassionate among us need compassion, Doctor.

BASHIR

Thank you, Garak. I didn't enjoy it either.

GARAK

(seizing the moment)

Why are you here, Doctor?

(BASHIR doesn't respond quickly)

GARAK

(continuing; patient)

Why are you here, Doctor?

GARAK

(continuing)

Julian, we both know it wasn't just to play out this domestic drama, fascinating though it was. Negotiations are being prepared as we speak - the Federation will be a key player. What was that human expression you told me once...oh...it was amusing...ah yes! "The shit is about to hit the fan?"

BASHIR

(amused)

Yes, my friend, it is. And we the "big bad Federation" would like to ensure that when it does, as few of us get splattered as possible.

GARAK

I'll be sure not to wear one of my good outfits.

(pause)

BASHIR

You are right, Garak. I didn't end up here by mistake - through my dreams - I didn't accidentally fall into the Nexus through some cosmic rift. I came here very specifically to see you.

GARAK

How did you know?

BASHIR

That you'd be here? I...was sitting in the bath in my quarters and it simply occurred to me that there was every chance that you would be popping into the Nexus this evening, perhaps on your way back from the grocery store...

GARAK

Dr. Parmak. He's yours?

BASHIR

Not mine, exactly. Not even ours - he's sort of...on loan. We didn't actually recruit him as such, more like...borrowed him for a while. He doesn't know very much. He's a sweet man, actually, bit whiny for my taste, but... sweet.

GARAK

This is indeed a surprise. How did you get him to agree to help you?

BASHIR

Oh, that was the easy bit. He has a lot of faith in you, Garak. Let's leave it at that. The tricky bit was getting to him without him realizing *who* was getting to him. We didn't want him knowing too much about us.

(BASHIR hands GARAK a chip)

BASHIR

(continuing)

Here. This is what you're looking for. It contains detailed information on both curative and preventative techniques as far as that plague is concerned. There is a infrastructure administration analysis which I hope will be appropriate. The U.S.S. Envoy is currently in orbit around Cardassia - she is carrying all the necessary equipment and supplies.

GARAK

(studying BASHIR)

It is indeed a strange mixture of loathing and gratitude that I feel, Doctor.

BASHIR

No need to thank me, Garak. And to be frank, I cannot understand your loathing.

GARAK

Please, Doctor, spare me the coyness. It's a bit late in the game for that.

BASHIR

It's true, we could have given you this chip some time ago.

GARAK

Even at the first signs of the outbreak.

BASHIR

Not quite. But early enough for you to have quickly brought the disease under control.

(a look between them)

Yes. And many lives would most likely have been saved.

GARAK

Exactly. You're supposed to be a doctor! Your mandate is to save the life of another, not to stand by like a political vulture waiting for death before you feast on the remains. You knew how to help and yet you did not - that, Doctor, is inexcusable, unforgivable, murder. Maybe now you understand my loathing.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

(changes into PALANDINE)

Elim?

GARAK

You held my people to ransom! But ransom to what? Why? Why are you doing this?

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Elim?

GARAK

(still furious)

Who is it? I can't see you. Come into the light.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

I cannot do that - I am ashamed at what you may think of me. I'm afraid I don't look so good at the moment.

GARAK

Palandine?

(GARAK makes steps towards her)

BASHIR/PALANDINE

No! Don't! Don't come any closer. Allow me the dignity of not showing myself. I want you to remember me as you do. Not as I am.

GARAK

What happened?

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Remember when we were schoolchildren, vying for affection and influence? It was simple then, wasn't it? Even Barkan was sweet then, in his way.

GARAK

I'm sorry I killed him - it wasn't my intention.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Wasn't it? You don't need to answer that. I don't miss him - I miss my daughter.

GARAK

Kel?

BASHIR/PALANDINE

They took her.

GARAK

Who took her? Where?

BASHIR/PALANDINE

They want to get to you, Garak. And taking my daughter - ~~our daughter~~ - is their way of accomplishing that.

GARAK

What do they want with me?

BASHIR/PALANDINE

They know more about you than *you* do, Elim. They know that you are our only hope.

GARAK

Without you...I have no hope. Come into the light, Palandine.

(PALANDINE takes a step forward)

GARAK

(continuing; horrified)
You...you have the...

BASHIR/PALANDINE

The Plague.

GARAK

I have the disk!

BASHIR/PALANDINE

It's too late, Elim. There is nothing to cure. My blood is no longer mine, my organs are withered, and I am already dead. Too late, my love. The dead will care for the dead, but you...you must care for the living.

GARAK

I will find Kel, I promise.

BASHIR/PALANDINE

Just promise me this...that you too will have the courage to step into the light as I just did for you. Remember the lessons of Bamarren, my little regnar.

(GARAK stares into the audience as PALANDINE walks away)

GARAK

The Plague.

BASHIR

Yes, I'd say you have your work cut out.

GARAK

It's the Plague.

BASHIR

'Course it is. But when are you going to do something about it - you have the disk.

GARAK

You could have saved her.

BASHIR

Saved who? Uh-oh...drifting off again, were we?

GARAK

Why did you wait?

BASHIR

Why are *you* waiting? Who were you speaking to this time?

GARAK

What kind of place is this?

BASHIR

This is the true final frontier, where all the information we receive is only worth the understanding we gain about ourselves.

GARAK

You're right. I have to get back. If I can't save Palandine, then I have to find Kel. Find *all* the children.

BASHIR

What children?

GARAK

(grabbing BASHIR - screaming)

Why did you wait?

BASHIR

(shrugs GARAK off)

Get ahold of yourself, Garak! And listen!

(GARAK has no choice)

BASHIR

(continuing)

Two weeks ago, a Klingon-Romulan force, defying Federation objections, was dispatched to invade Cardassia. Cardassia was a sitting duck. On nearing your solar system, news of the plague ravaging your planet forced them to abort the mission. Had we intervened, had there been no

plague - I guarantee, whoever was left alive on your planet after the invasion would, by now, be struggling to come to terms with Klingon Opera and Romulan Ale.

GARAK

The Federation would never have allowed such a flagrant occupation. You would have come to our aid.

BASHIR

We have just come through one of the most costly wars in our history, Garak. And peace with the Romulans is a valuable asset at the best of times. I doubt very much that the Federation would have applied anything more than the strongest diplomatic pressure.

GARAK

So, you were prepared to let our people die of the plague rather than risk that our planet become occupied?

BASHIR

It's all about numbers - Cardassian numbers being ravaged by disease - Klingon, Romulan, and Cardassian numbers falling during an invasion - maybe even Federation numbers had we decided to become militarily involved. We had to weigh the relative death tolls. We have a responsibility to our people, Garak.

GARAK

What's to prevent the Klingons and Romulans from invading us once the plague has been stemmed?

BASHIR

You.

GARAK

Me?

BASHIR

Yes, Garak. You.

(GARAK stops. He stares out as if he sees someone calling him. BASHIR takes a chair and places it center. He undergoes a change and gestures GARAK to sit)

BASHIR/TAIN

Sit, Elim.

GARAK

Enabran?

BASHIR/TAIN

Yes. Sit down, please.

(GARAK sits)

BASHIR/TAIN

(continuing)

Odd, isn't it?

GARAK

(looks)

What?

BASHIR/TAIN

Don't look at me, please.

(he indicates the audience - GARAK looks out)

You had every opportunity, every advantage. How did you become such a messy person?

GARAK

What are you doing here?

BASHIR/TAIN

The lessons one learns in The Pit, a basic stratagem, is to never identify with the moment. If you're hit and you experience pain, you don't react with anger, you make the next move based on logic. Adjust without attachment.

GARAK

(looks)

I leaned all this from Calyx...

BASHIR/TAIN

Don't look at me. Out there!

(he points again)

If you make a move that inspires confidence, admiration, even love, you don't stop to congratulate yourself, do you?

(he stops)

Do you?

GARAK

I know all this. Why are...?

BASHIR/TAIN

You follow through to the inevitable conclusion, complete the action, even if it means betraying that confidence and love.

GARAK

(looks at Tain)

What is your point?

BASHIR/TAIN

Look at the faces in front of you!

GARAK

Why?

BASHIR/TAIN

Because we are in this place - this Nexus, this Dream Box - and these are the people who can verify the logic of the moment.

GARAK

There is no logic in this moment. You're dead, Enabran!

BASHIR/TAIN

This is why I could never trust you with the Obsidian Order, Elim. Once you have set a course for yourself and begin moving in that direction - it is impossible for you to change. A great quality for those who follow orders...but disastrous in a leader.

GARAK

But if our goals are to be achieved...

BASHIR/TAIN

They can be achieved any number of ways. There *isn't* just one way. Just as there isn't just *one* Elim Garak. Trouble is, you attach yourself to a situation, an idea... a person, and you lose sight of the information that is coming in from all around you. Step out of the box, Elim, take a good look at all those faces!

GARAK

I don't know who they are.

BASHIR/TAIN

Of course you don't - you never paid them any attention. But do you think, for one moment, that is is just some kind of coincidence that they are here tonight as witnesses?

(GARAK does not respond)

BASHIR/TAIN

(continuing)

Let's say they are all one person. If you want to bend that person to your will, would you make the same argument to that woman over there as you would to this gentleman?

GARAK

What's your point, Enabran?

BASHIR/TAIN

Your inability to really see this person

(gesturing to the audience)

Makes you unable to see yourself - Look at them, Elim. They are *the mirror*.

(He puts a hand on Garak's shoulder)

BASHIR/TAIN

(continuing)

You have the disk, Elim. Why are you still here?

GARAK

So we can have one last chat?

BASHIR/TAIN

Perhaps it is because you don't have a plan. You have *never* had a plan for yourself. You have always been a character in someone else's book. A re-actor waiting for information to re-act to. What are you going to do when you return to Cardassia with your disk?

(GARAK says nothing)

You've lost the Obsidian Order, you've lost everything and everyone you've ever loved. I think you're still here because you are waiting for someone else to turn the page - why don't you turn the page yourself, Elim? Better yet, why not start writing your own book? Study these faces, Elim - what do they want?

(GARAK studies the audience intently)

GARAK

I feel I need to stop at each new face and pour myself in. Everyone is so complete, so engrossing...

BASHIR/TAIN

Move on...don't become distracted...a beautiful face, an extraordinary mind. See the whole mirror, Elim. Don't get lost - the whole has a need - move on -

(GARAK focuses on each individual in turn)

GARAK

The book...is beginning to write itself, Father, the words carefully placed, forming sentences, poetry...everyone looks directly in my eye and...the paragraph begins to form. A story. A parable. A list. A yearning. A warning.

(BASHIR has walked back to his podium and watches Garak intently)

GARAK

(continuing)

I feel the need to run, screaming. This weight! The information...almost too much to... Yet it's so true! The book is writing itself, Father!

(BASHIR claps his hands to break the spell)

BASHIR

That's enough!

(GARAK stops abruptly as if waking from a trance)

BASHIR

(continuing)

Sorry to butt in...

GARAK

You're beginning to irritate me, Doctor.

BASHIR

Beginning?

GARAK

What? What do you want now?

BASHIR

I just wanted to add my two cents worth, Garak. To the instruction you just received from Tain. And very eloquent it was too - he hasn't lost his touch - death hasn't shaken him a bit!

(GARAK can't believe it)

GARAK

You heard? You could see Tain? But I thought...

BASHIR

Yes, I know. I led you to believe that...I couldn't see your...conversations...your encounters with these...ghosts. Bit of a fib on my part I'm afraid, sorry about that.

GARAK

Then you knew.

BASHIR

Yes.

GARAK

You've known all along.

BASHIR

Yes. And, dare I say, you've known all along what you have to do.

GARAK

You never cease to amaze me, Doctor. It's quite a method you've developed.

BASHIR

Yes, well, it was very important that you be relaxed. You may have not allowed yourself to *drift off* at all.

GARAK

But why the interruption?

(gesturing to the audience)

I was beginning to enjoy this particular encounter.

BASHIR

I could tell... What Enabran didn't mention was that the process of looking at a group of people as a group has its own pitfalls. Your detachment must be absolute - a leader never allows himself to become intoxicated by the power of the group. The power of their truth.

GARAK

(taking this all in)

How do you know all this, Doctor?

BASHIR

If I'm good at anything at all, my friend, it's research, and your former mentor has not left us short on information.

GARAK

I now understand why Tain gave you the information about the wire in the first place.

BASHIR

I had access to excellent material on this mission and I didn't waste it. Neither must you.

(GARAK goes back to his podium thinking to himself. Something is occurring but he can't quite figure it out)

BASHIR

(continuing)
Elim?

(GARAK stops. He looks at the doctor, his mind still grappling with a problem...)

GARAK

(at last a spark)

Doctor! What did you just say?

BASHIR

What do you mean? About Tain?

GARAK

No, no, no, no. Forget Tain a moment. Forget your mission. ...Say...my name again - just as you did. You rarely call me that.

BASHIR

Elim...

GARAK

(the problem is more elusive than he thought)

Damn! No, that's not it. Say something else...say something with meaningful... say "I love you."

BASHIR

(bit awkward)

Are you all right? I mean, I know I don't often call you by your first name and everything...erm...but...

GARAK

(shouting)

I love you! Say it! I love you!

BASHIR

(shouting back)

All right! I love you! Now what?

GARAK

(a man with a mission)

No! That's not it! Say it with feeling like you mean it!

BASHIR

What the hell is your problem, Garak? I mean, I know we've been close friends in the past...

GARAK

Say it.

BASHIR

All right. All right. I love you. There...I've said it. We're not going any further down this road, Garak, not in front of all these people...

(GARAK is working on the problem in his mind)

GARAK

Good. Good. Now say it again.

BASHIR

You are out of your mind!

GARAK

Now say it like you don't mean it. Say it politely. As if you were saying goodbye to someone - a child.

BASHIR

Erm...I love you!

GARAK

Yes! Yes! That's it! I understand. Say it another way - say it uncomfortably as if you were on a first date and the woman who just blurted it out to you is expecting a similar response. Lie.

BASHIR

(BASHIR finds this a bit difficult)

Er...

GARAK

Oh surely, Doctor, this is the one you would find most natural...

BASHIR

Ok. Ok. Wait a second, I need to get into the mood...ahh...I love you.

GARAK

I understand you perfectly, Doctor. Every nuance. Every vocal gesture.

BASHIR

I don't understand you!

GARAK

I feel as though we are meeting for the very first time. It's truly wonderful. Listen very carefully as I speak to you...listen for the "hum" that has always accompanied my speech - the almost imperceptible "hum" in the background. Are you listening?

BASHIR

Yes, I am - but I don't hear it.

GARAK

Of course you don't - it isn't there! You are listening to me! To me! Not a translation of me!

(BASHIR'S turn to struggle with the notion)

The words you hear me speak - you hear as one of my countrymen would hear.

BASHIR

No translation...

GARAK

Precisely. No translation - the universal translator - its background hum - it's not there!

BASHIR

But I'm not speaking in a Cardassian tongue - I don't even know how to say "hello" in Cardassian - my physiognomy wouldn't allow it. I would just end up croaking.

GARAK

And I would find it impossible to speak in a human dialect - yet there is no translation - this place is allowing me to speak as I feel and better yet, allowing you to *understand* what I feel. I speak as a human to you and you, as a Cardassian to me.

BASHIR

You're right, Garak, it's amazing! Just imagine - if all our negotiations could be held in this place - there would be no misunderstandings.

GARAK

I understand you, Doctor. I truly do. It took me a while...but I understand. I understand Tain, too, and Palandine...and I understand *what* I must do when I leave.

(GARAK holds out his hand)

GARAK

(continuing)

Thank you, my friend...

BASHIR

I understand you too, my friend. Now, I suggest you find your way out of this spooky place and start the process of healing your people, Garak - healing them of this vicious plague.

GARAK

...And healing them as a race who have lost their faith in their leaders.

BASHIR

There you are...your new book...You will make a fine leader.

GARAK

But first, I must somehow win their confidence.

BASHIR

We have provided you with a means of getting their attention - but you will have to do the rest.

GARAK

Remarkable...I don't feel the slightest bit confused. It's all very clear. Strange...I don't even feel like running away...hiding...changing form like my regnar and disappearing into the shadows.

BASHIR

There are no shadows left in which you can hide, my friend. They have all been explored.

GARAK

And you convinced me earlier that I had nothing left to hide. Aren't you a clever fellow?

(BASHIR smiles and begins to leave the stage. He stops)

BASHIR

By the way...I don't just want to tell you this on behalf of the Federation, although I know they too will want to let you know...

GARAK

Yes?

BASHIR

I am so deeply sorry about the deaths of so many of your countrymen and women lost to this abominable disease. It isn't right that we *could've* saved them and didn't - there is no excuse - there is no explanation. It was a decision that I hope, you as the leader of your people will never have to face.

GARAK

Doctor - maybe our consciences can meet in this place one day and discuss this further...but for now - I can only tell you that I am grateful and relieved to hear your words of compassion.

BASHIR

So long, my friend.

(GARAK watches as BASHIR leaves the auditorium. He walks slowly over to BASHIR'S podium as the house lights come up full)

GARAK

(Addressing a large gathering of Cardassians)

My fellow Cardassians. I stand here before you not as your leader, although I accept - with grace - I hope - this nomination. No, I stand before you as a Cardassian, one who has cried with you at the passing of so many of our people, one who has huddled in dark corners with you while madmen roam our streets shouting for our blood, one who has, stone by stone, begun the process of rebuilding our great cities - I would like to say that more than *any* of these - I stand before you as one of you.

(during this next passage the sound begins to fade on GARAK'S mike until there is no lift at all and GARAK whereupon his voice also fades)

GARAK

(continuing)

The task before us seems overwhelming, I know. Overwhelming because we all know that it is more than just a matter of placing stone on stone - it will also be a matter of placing hand in hand.

(GARAK'S performance is gradually reduced to a whisper and then finally to a mime)

We will all need the patience of our elders in the weeks ahead and an ability which only our children seem to possess - the ability to pick-up the pieces of our lives and start over as if there were only tomorrow to live for - to think of every new day as realm of possibility. To remember all the light and teachings of our yesterdays....

(at this point, after GARAK has clearly faded out and is only miming - we cue a recording)

BASHIR/RECORDED

Sir? You asked for me?

CONTROLLER/RECORDED

Ah yes! Good, thank you for coming. I just wanted to let you know that regarding that business on Cardassia...

BASHIR/RECORDED

Yes, sir?

CONTROLLER/RECORDED

Everything seems to be going smoothly. Well done and thank you...good job.

(a pause)

Well...? What are you waiting for? A medal?

(CURTAIN)